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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2009

In Today's Papers

All Hands on Deck for Davos  
Media outlets report Prime Minister Erdogan will participate in the World Economic Forum (WEF) meetings in Davos from January 28-February 1. Media comment on the fragile climate in Davos as world leaders meet in the midst of a global financial crisis. Leftist Taraf reports, "The Era of Wall Street's Pretentiousness Is Over in Davos." Mainstream Milliyet reports, "The Crisis Hits the Summit," as "There Is No Lobster in Davos This Year," and "The atmosphere is like that of a refugee camp." Mainstream Sabah focuses on the domestic angle in the headline, "Turkey's 20th Agreement with the IMF Will Be Discussed in Davos." Mainstream Hurriyet takes the same domestic approach in "Talks with the IMF Are Suspended," but "There is Hope for Davos."

Prime Minister Erdogan will be accompanied by a delegation including chief EU negotiator Egemen Bagis, State Minister Mehmet Simsek and Foreign Minister Ali Babacan. In Davos, Erdogan will also meet with World Bank President Robert Zoellick and Middle East Quartet representative Tony Blair as well as with the prime ministers and heads of state of Russia, Kazakhstan, Albania, the Netherlands, and Colombia.

In a related story, State Minister Mehmet Simsek told the press before departing for Davos that Turkey and the IMF have agreed on several points regarding the latest IMF loan negotiations, and that an agreement was "near." Simsek said he'd continue the talks with the IMF in Davos.

A Balancing Act - Turkish Leaders Fight to Reconcile Their Gaza Rhetoric For Domestic and International Audiences  
Media outlets continue to pay close attention to the statements of Turkish officials regarding the ceasefire talks between Israel and Hamas. Mainstream Hurriyet carries the headline, "Gaza Bomb in Davos" and reports Prime Minister Erdogan will come face to face with Israeli President Shimon Peres during a session at the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos entitled "Gaza: A Model for Middle East Peace." In the session, Hurriyet reports, "Erdogan is expected to stress that he is not opposed to the Israeli people, but

opposed to the Israeli government and those who approve of the attacks against Gaza." Hurriyet also reports that Erdogan is also expected to emphasize that "anti-Semitism is a crime against humanity just like Islamophobia." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports, "Turkey Will Explain Its Middle East Policy at the Davos Summit" Meanwhile, liberal Radikal's columnist Murat Yetkin reports Turkish Foreign Minister Babacan told him, "We do not approve of Hamas, but peace is not possible without Hamas." Mainstream Milliyet highlights Babacan's message to Hamas in the headline, "Choose Between Politics and Arms." Mainstream Milliyet columnist Fikret Bila takes Babacan's comments as "a criticism of Hamas." Meanwhile, mainstream Vatan reports in "We Are Against the Policies of the Israeli Government," that Turkish government Spokesman Cemil Cicek, said, "Our stance on Israeli policies has nothing to do with the people of Israel or our Jewish citizens," but, "Turkey is against Israeli policies that have created a humanitarian drama" in Gaza.

In a related story, leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet reports on its front page "Israel Won't Give Drones to Turkey," and notes, "Israel has not given a positive answer to Turkey's purchase requests for unmanned drone aircraft." Cumhuriyet sees this response from Israel as "a reaction to Erdogan's harsh criticism of Israel during the Gaza operations," and the paper notes, "Turkey needs these drones in order to fight terrorism."

#### Editorial Commentary on Gaza

Murat Yetkin wrote in liberal-intellectual Radikal: "Foreign Minister Babacan does not see any disharmony between the remarks of President Gul and PM Erdogan regarding their reactions to the

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situation in Gaza. FM Babacan also notes that 'Hamas has made mistakes and Turkey cannot endorse these mistakes' but he also adds "Hamas cannot be ignored because peace is not possible without cooperation from Hamas." However, Babacan also emphasized, "Hamas should choose between arms and politics. Turkey prefers that Hamas take the political path."

Sedat Ergin wrote in mainstream Milliyet: "Prime Minister Erdogan's approach to the Gaza crisis shows that Turkish foreign policy is not rational, balanced, or smart. Not only has the PM acted like a spokesperson for Hamas, but his view of Hamas sees no distinction between terrorism and politics. The general tone of his criticism against Israel and against Jews has planted the seeds of anti-Semitism throughout the country. But the most problematic thing Erdogan did during this debate was to draw a parallel between Hamas and the AKP."

Cenap Cakmak wrote in Islamist oriented Zaman: "There are growing complaints from international organizations that the Israeli army committed war crimes during their recent operations in Gaza. The Israeli army took no measures to avoid civilian casualties, and thus Israel clearly violated international law regarding the protection of civilians. Legally it is possible to put individuals on trial for war crimes even if their native country is not part of the International Court of Justice. However, Israel is protected by the United States, and it is impossible to expect that those responsible will not be brought to justice because the U.S. will oppose any such efforts brought before the UN Security Council."

Ankara Prosecutor Drops Charges against Armenian Apology Campaign Milliyet, Zaman, Hurriyet, Sabah, Vatan, Cumhuriyet: The Ankara Chief Prosecutor's Office has concluded that there is no basis on which to prosecute Turkish intellectuals who launched an online petition campaign to apologize for the events of 1915. The petition was launched on the Internet on December 15, 2008 and says, "My conscience does not accept the insensitivity showed to and the denial of the Great Calamity that befell the Ottoman Armenians in 1915. I reject this injustice and for my share, I empathize with the feelings and pain of my Armenian brothers. I apologize to them."

#### Metal-Is Union Chair Ozbek Arrested

All papers report that the head of Turkish Metal Union Mustafa Ozbek was formally charged with 'assisting a terrorist organization' in connection to the Ergenekon case. Mainstream Hurriyet headlines

"Ozbek Arrested for helping the terrorist organization." The Turk-Is labor union condemned the charges and called the Ergenekon case "political."

TV News:  
CNN Turk

#### Domestic News

- Monday's meeting of the Inter-University Board (UAK) saw heated debates over a proposal by Higher Education Council (YOK) for the opening of Kurdish-language and literature departments in universities in Ankara and Istanbul.
- On January 28-29, the pro-Kurdish DTP leader Ahmet Turk will go to Brussels to join a conference entitled, "Turkey, The EU and The Kurds."
- Turkish Central Bank Governor Durmus Yilmaz predicts year-end inflation to stand between 5.4 and 8.2 percent.
- 80 percent of tax revenues in Turkey are collected in the provinces of Istanbul, Kocaeli, Ankara and Izmir.

#### International News

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- The U.S. permanent representative to the UN, Susan Rice, says the new administration will make Iran's nuclear program a top diplomatic priority and will pursue direct talks with Tehran.
- British channel Sky TV joins the BBC in deciding not to broadcast a charity appeal for Gaza, despite mounting political and public pressure for them to do so.
- 16 Saddam Hussein-era Iraqi officials, including former deputy PM Tariq Aziz and Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majeed (Chemical Ali) will face a new trial for repressing Kurds.
- Indonesia joins Malaysia in banning Muslims from practicing yoga that includes Hindu rituals.

JEFFREY